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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

July 16, 2002

Honorable Norman Y. Mineta
Secretary of Transportation
Department of Transportation
400 7th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Mineta:

On July 10, the Subcommittee on Surface Transportation and Merchant Marine of the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee held a hearing on rail safety issues. At the hearing, Federal Railroad Administrator Allan Rutter and members of the Committee discussed the issue of Amtrak's short-term financial needs and the need for a multi-year authorization.

Mr. Rutter stated that he expects to work with the Appropriations Committee in having the Administration's reform "principles," as outlined in your speech to the Chamber of Commerce on June 20, 2002, adopted as part of FY 2003 appropriations legislation should Congress decide to provide an amount in excess of the Administration's \$521 budget request. This is deeply troubling to me.

I would strongly urge you and your staff to work with this Committee on reauthorization initiatives and not pursue them through the appropriations process. The Committee has performed much work on the future of Amtrak: we have held numerous hearings on Amtrak and its future, and legislation by both Senator McCain and myself were introduced early this session. In April the Committee approved S. 1991, the National Defense Rail Act, by a bipartisan vote of 20-3. We still have not received any proposal from the Administration and in fact, we have received very little input from the Administration on S.1991.

The Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee is responsible for authorizing passenger rail legislation. I reiterate my request that you work with this Committee through the reauthorization process. Let me be clear -- I will resist all efforts to have long-term proposals regarding Amtrak considered as part of the one-year appropriations process.

Sincerely,



Fritz Hollings
Chairman

Committee on Commerce, Science
and Transportation